QUEERING ARCHITECTURAL TASTE

This reading and research seminar centers around the invisible forces behind our aesthetic realm. Using a queer lens, we will identify and unpack the aesthetic value systems inherent in architecture and its adjacencies. The seminar asks: What is the relationship between predominant taste cultures, kitsch, and queerness? How does existing scholarship define queer architecture? How does it define queer space? How does architectural style confer an aesthetic value system, and how can we come to recognize and reappropriate its tools for proposing alternative ways of seeing, making, and identification? Is there a white architecture? Is there a brown architecture? Is there a queer, or a straight architecture? We will focus on unpacking the values of Modern Architecture and its construction of a certain kind of beauty. If the prevailing conception of beauty is not a reflection of how we see ourselves, whose beauty is it? How does this conception of beauty change over time in architectural discourse, particularly in the overturning of styles and tastes? What are these stories telling us and what remains untold?
Course Description

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His-story or her-story, whose-story is it anyway?

Learning Objectives

We will approach subjects such as gender, sexuality, and race. Discussing these issues may be difficult, but they should be. Students should expect to take ownership of their comments during discussion and at times one’s comments may be challenged by others. It is the goal of the course to confront our preconceptions through respectful and sometimes difficult discourse. Speak up when you agree or disagree. This is a collegial space, and it is expected to listen to one’s peers and respond with respect. It is part of my job to ensure a safe learning environment of kindness, mutual respect, and professionalism. We are in this together.

As architecture is fundamentally an interdisciplinary medium, this seminar will investigate readings and objects of inquiry drawn broadly from history, theory, art, film, fiction, and architecture. Students will develop intellectual tools for reconciling and contesting, integrating or resisting these stories around our built environment, and importantly, crafting a story of one’s own. It isn’t expected that everything is immediately illuminated alone, but through discussion we can develop as a group a deeper comprehension.

Students will investigate what is included and omitted from the aesthetic discourses through weekly responses, object stories (referred to as ‘fetishes’ here), a research presentation, and a final research paper. Readings will include texts from gender studies, queer theory, philosophy, architecture history, and architects’ own manifestos to better understand for whom and how the prevailing canonical architecture came to write its own identity—and how we can write and create one for ourselves. Readings of interest will include excerpts on the performance of gender, architecture’s performance of identity via ornament and color, and the intersection between style, taste, and the values of success and failure in the architectural discourse.
Typical Class Structure

9:30 am – 11:00 am | First Half: Each class will begin with students distributing printed copies of their week’s reading response to the class. 5-10 minutes will be allotted to read the responses as an opportunity to spark discussion. The instructor will lecture on background information of the readings as needed. The student discussion leader will then direct conversation on the material of the week. The discussion leader may choose to call upon certain students and or respond to the class’s reading responses as they see fit. It is not a requirement to direct conversation in response to others’ reading responses. If no student is assigned discussion lead, the instructor will take the role of discussion lead.

11:00 am – 11:15 am | Break

11:20 am – 12:30 pm | Second Half: Object Fetish Presentation. Students assigned to present their Object for the week will commence the second half of class (approximately a 10-minute presentation each). The Object presenter will then guide discussion around the material of the Object presentation, and/or may use objects (buildings or art) from the readings on which to focus the class’s attention. The Object presenter will solicit questions from the class, in a manner similar to the discussion leader but will use visual and/or auditory objects presented on a screen to ground discussion and encourage a close reading from the class. If no student is assigned Object Fetish presenter, instructor will present.

Required Texts

All readings will be posted on a shared Google Drive folder and must be printed and brought to class on the assigned dates. See the schedule below for readings/viewings and dates.

Requirements and Expectations

All assignments are due on the day and at the time that has been assigned. Late assignments will be penalized a third of a grade a day (thus, an A- will become an B+ etc), including each weekend day. I will take your commitment, effort and participation in this course into account when it comes to determining final grades. Final grades are not negotiable. All class policies subject to change, with notice.

Readings: Readings are due on the day they are listed in the syllabus. Please arrive to class with sufficient notes on the readings to be ready for engaged, rigorous class discussion. Students are responsible for any reading/viewing missed as a result of absence.

Assessment: Final grades will be based on weekly reading responses, leading two discussions, an Object Fetish presentation, completion and quality of the essay assignments, and regular class participation.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Responses</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>(each class; emailed + printed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object Fetish Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>(sign up for one date)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Discussion Lead</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>(sign up for two dates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Essay</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>(proposal draft 12/6; final 12/13)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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Essay Format: Essays should be sent as Word Documents (not pdfs, Google docs, or anything else), double-spaced with 1-inch margins and 12-point Times New Roman or similar font. They should include an appropriate heading on the top of the first page (name, professor’s name, course, date). Please also include a witty or provocative title. Page numbers should be included on the top right of each page after
the first. You must have in-text citations and a works cited page in MLA format for any texts you cite, as well as a list of figures page for any visual material. Your works cited page does not count toward the page requirement or word count.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. This class is designed to rely on in-class group discussion, so it is extremely important for students to be present and on time for every class. Three unexcused absences can result in a non-passing grade.

Participation: Students are expected to participate in class discussion and activities, in addition to completing assignments and readings before each class. Discussion is core to the educational value of seminar. Though participating in an interdisciplinary seminar may seem intimidating at times, you are not alone. Remember that your voice and experience is valuable to the discussion, so please speak your mind. Mistakes are encouraged and confusion is part of the process. No one is an expert—do not be afraid to speak up. During class, pose a question, respond to a peer, to the reading, or integrate an experience or object with the discussion.

Honor Code & Plagiarism: If you are unsure how to incorporate a source into a document, discuss it with me in a timely manner before handing in the assignment. It is expected of every student to abide by the UT Honor Code. Dishonesty and/or the poor treatment of your classmates will not be tolerated. The UT Honor Code (or statement of ethics) and an explanation or example of what constitutes plagiarism and cheating can be found at: https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-c/student-discipline-and-conduct/

Diversity Statement: Every student in this class will be honored and respected as an individual with distinct experiences, talents, and backgrounds. Issues of diversity may be a part of class discussion, assigned material, and projects. The instructor will make every effort to ensure that an inclusive environment exists for all students. If you have any concerns or suggestions for improving the classroom climate, please do not hesitate to speak with me or to contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 617-824-8528 or the Campus Climate Response Team online via http://diversity.utexas.edu/ccrt/reportform.

Special Accommodations & Accessibility Statement: At the beginning of the semester, students with disabilities who need special accommodations should notify the instructor by presenting a letter prepared by the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, and accommodations will need to be discussed at that time. To ensure that the most appropriate accommodations can be provided, students should contact the SSD Office at 471-6259 or 471-4641 TTY. Five business days before an exam or assignment, the student should remind the instructor of their accommodation needs.

Safety & Security: Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside. Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class. In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office. To find more information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures go to: www.utexas.edu/emergency

Title IX: This new law requires all employees of Texas universities to report sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking to a Title IX Coordinator. An employee who fails to report an incident may be subject to criminal offense (misdemeanor) and the university is required to terminate their employment. The reporting obligations and penalties take effect January 1, 2020. Reports can be
made by phone: (512) 471-0419; email: titleix@austin.utexas.edu; or online: https://titleix.utexas.edu/file-a-report.

Laptops & Devices: Except during assigned presentations, and in situations where an educational need exists, there will be no laptops, tablets, phones, screens, texting, or emailing allowed in class. If you have a specified educational need to use a device for note-taking purposes, please contact me to make arrangements.

Email Policy: Emails sent after 6 pm may not be answered until the following morning. If you expect or need a response on the same day, please make sure to email me before this time.

Assignments

Reading Responses: Write a short response (~150-200 words, around one paragraph) to each week’s readings and/or films. Email the response to the instructor by 8 pm on Thursday before class (email Adam.Miller@austin.utexas.edu). Responses must be printed and brought to class with enough copies for the instructor and all students in the class to facilitate discussion. During class students will read each other’s responses. Responses should be open-ended, can come in the form of a thought-provoking argument, reflection, or comparison, or pose a directed question. This is an opportunity to take task with a passage, quote, or image drawn from one or more of the readings/films. If a passage is troubling or confusing, this is an opportunity to direct input during discussion. As readings and discussion objects are interdisciplinary it is natural to feel confused at times. Do not be afraid to ask questions, make mistakes or ask for help. These responses are integral to develop our collective class discourse, so show us your thought process, draw us to your past experiences or adjacent aesthetic objects that support, challenge, or enliven the primary reading or object. The writings must cite at least one quote or image. Please provide page numbers; for films, contextualize sufficiently and, if possible, provide a time stamp.

Discussion Leader Presentation (2 dates; sometimes in groups of 2): You will take an active role in stimulating discussion for the first half of class. Instead of writing the typical reading response, lead discussion and prepare a handout. At the start of class, present on that day’s readings and/or films (sign-up sheet passed around first and second days of class). Certain dates may have two discussion leaders. If there are two presenters, work together, using points of agreement or disagreement as inspiration. This assignment can be thought of as an extended reading response, where interpretation and asking questions is key. Prepare a 1-page handout (2-page for two presenters) with enough printed copies for the class, which draws attention to a quote, passage, or image from each reading/film assigned for that week. The handout is due during the start of class as printout and emailed to the instructor before class. Your handout should direct us toward items of inquiry you want to address with the class. What did you find interesting? Alarming? Boring or beautiful? This handout can be thought of as a reference to guide discussion and need not exhaustively summarize readings. You may begin the presentation with a brief presentation on the background information on the context of the piece as needed, taking no more than several minutes. You can think of this as an opportunity to direct discussion using a framework or interpretation. Lead us into your thought process, which may include points of agreement, disagreement, or even areas of confusion, and show us points of interest.

Object Fetish (media presentation, sign up for 1 date): 10-15 min visual and/or auditory presentation. What are you obsessed with? Does a particular object bring you great pleasure, disgust, or spark another feeling entirely? Taking pleasure in something can be a way to resist the normative structure of time and its teleological progress. A fetish or a pleasure can bring us to “a present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still, and has come to a stop,” affectively allowing us to see “now something whole and complete” (Agamben 102, 104). This is an opportunity to bring an outside object to the attention of the
class not found in the readings/films. This presentation can draw from any media or genre: in other words, the object does not have to be a building, though of course buildings are welcome. This presentation can draw lateral associations between the themes or theories of that week (or the broader class in general) and an object about which you are passionate. During your presentation show us how it relates to the themes of the class, using a comparative method if necessary, or extrapolate an idea or passage from the course to make meaning for your object. During your presentation you may attempt to ask or answer certain questions such as: What makes this a queer object or queer building? What does the object tell us about itself, its author, and about ourselves? For whom is the object made? Why was it made, and when? How does it fit into a system of meaning or carve an edge for new meaning? What affects does it produce? Is it beautiful, ugly, kitsch, camp, or none of the above? Does it succeed or fail at producing a certain effect, reaching a certain audience, answering or asking certain questions? You may choose to address these questions or propose your own.

Essay Proposal (due 10/25): Print one copy to bring to class and email to instructor before class. Choose a topic, and see Final Essay section below for guidance on selecting one. This proposal should include a witty title, a 1-page enticing description (200 words), a hypothesis (1 paragraph), and a bibliography, and figures (figures, or images are encouraged but not required). Do not include filler in the bibliography. Pose a problem or question or identify a gap in the scholarship.

Final Essay (draft due 12/6; final due 12/13):

Graduate Requirement: 10-15 pages (not including works cited or figures)
Undergraduate Requirement: 6-8 pages (not including works cited or figures)

This essay should be a well-researched story about an object, space, or people in a place or time which builds on or extrapolates from the themes of course. The topic is entirely up to you. It could take the form of a close reading of a building. It could read like a manifesto. You can tell a narrative. For all the stories we have told in the class, which ones have yet to be told? Shed new light on the edges of the architectural discourse, oppose a predominant narrative, or bring something in contact with the language of the course about which you are passionate. Tell another side of the canon or throw the canon out the window. Write an off-modern story, describe a mode or method for ambiguating a kind of architecture, space, or people in a place. It is an opportunity to use theory and history from the course, but it is only a requirement to use one reading established in the course. Use the readings as a guide, but not a prescriptive framework: come to your own conclusions. You are encouraged to challenge the prevailing conceptions for what the discourse wants us to care. The style in which you write is open to you, but what is important is a rigorous and well researched argument, story, narrative. Take a risk with a new idea with supporting documents, sights and sounds. If you are a visual thinker, feel free to create drawings or other representations which supports your argument and researched readings. See above Essay Format section for requirements on citations and formatting.
Schedule

Week 1:

8/30 | Introductions, syllabus review, discussion leader Sign up, Object Fetish sign up
In class: Jennie Livingston, *Paris Is Burning* (film, 1h 11min)

Week 2: Whose Queer Space Is It Anyway, Pt 1

9/6 | Last day for discussion leader sign up, Object Fetish sign up
Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space* (pp. 1-97)
Eve K. Sedgewick, “Epistemology of the Closet” *Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (pp. 45-61)

Week 3: Whose Queer Space Is It Anyway, Pt 2

9/13 | Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space* (pp. 98-195)
Andrés Jaque, “Grindr Archiurbanism” *Log: 41* (pp. 74-84)
Olivier Vallerand, “Introduction” diss. *Making Homes Building (Self-) Identities* (pp. 1-13)

Week 4: Sex Is Not for Kids: A Queer Future for Us

9/20 | José Muñoz, “Introduction” *Cruising Utopia* (pp. 1-18)
…… “Performing Disidentifications” *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (pp. 1-34)
Lee Edelman, “The Future is Kid Stuff” (pp. 18-30)
Audre Lorde, “The Uses of the Erotic” *Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (pp. 339-343)

Week 5: Performing Genders, Seeing Race

9/27 | Judith Butler “Introduction” *Bodies That Matter* (pp. xi-xxx) 19 pgs
Roxane Gay “Bad Feminist: Take One” & “Bad Feminist: Take Two” 10 pgs
Audre Lorde “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” 3 pgs
Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto” *The Transgender Studies Reader* (pp. 102-118)

Week 6: Locating A Queer Place and Time

10/4 | Jack Judith Halberstam,
…… “Queer Temporality and Postmodern Geographies” *In a Queer Time and Place* (pp. 1-22)
…… “The Brandon Archive” *In a Queer Time and Place* (22-46)
…… “Low Theory” *The Queer Art of Failure* (pp. 1-25)
Lucas Crawford, “Introduction” *Transgender Architectonics* (pp. 1-15)

Week 7: Architecture in Black / Flesh and Skin

10/11 | Darrell Fields, (excerpts) *Architecture in Black* (pp. 169-183)
Mario Gooden, “Space as Praxis as Identity” from *Dark Space: Architecture, Representation, Black Identity* (pp. 42-62)
Anne Anlin Cheng “Her Own Skin” *Second Skin* (pp. 1-15)
…… “Ornamentalism” *Critical Inquiry: 44* (pp. 415-446)
Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak “Who Claims Alterity” *Art Theory* (pp. 1-7)
Week 8: Discontents on the Edge, Finding the Fringes of the Modern

10/18 | Svetlana Boym, “The Off-Modern” *The Svetlana Boym Reader* (pp. 387-405)
Giorgio Agamben “Infancy and History” *Infancy and History* (pp. 24-30)
…
Jurgen Habermas “Modernity: An Incomplete Project” *Art Theory* (pp. 1-13)

Week 9: The Architecture of Power

10/25 | Essay Proposal due in class, and emailed to (Adam.Miller@austin.utexas.edu)

Louis Althusser “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” *Essays on Ideology* (pp. 1-60)
Michel Foucault “Panopticism” *Race/Ethnicity* v2.1 (pp. 1-12)
…
Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias” *October*: 1984 (pp. 1-9)

Week 10: Discerning Taste

11/1 | Dick Hebdige, “Subculture and Style” *Design Studies* (pp. 206-208)
Pierre Bourdieu, “The Aesthetic Sense as the Sense of Distinction” from
*Design Studies* (pp. 198-200)
Sarah Thornton, “The Social Logic of Subcultural Capital” *Club Cultures* (pp. 154-164)
Dave Hickey, “Buying the World” *Dedalus* Fall 2002 (pp. 69-87)
George P. Landow, “Ruskin’s Theory of Typical Beauty” (pp. 1-14)

Week 11: Dragging Modernity: The Duck and The Decorated Shed

11/8 | Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Seven Izenour,
“Part II: Ugly and Ordinary Architecture” *Learning from Las Vegas* (85-165)

Week 12: Bad Taste… Never Felt So Good!

11/15 | Susan Sontag, “Notes on Camp” *Against Interpretation* (pp. 275-292)
Adam Nathaniel Furman, “Outrage: The Prejudice Against Queer Aesthetics” 1p
…
“Vibrance Matters” *RM 1000: Timeless* (pp. 225-236)
John Waters, *Female Trouble* (film, 1h 29min) (watch at home)

Week 13: I’d Rather Be Crude Than Beautiful

11/22 | Adolf Loos, “Ornament and Crime” (excerpt) *Art Theory*. (pp. 1-10)
Anne Anlin Cheng, “Housing Baker, Dressing Loos” *Second Skin* (pp. 49-82)
…
“Skins, Tattoos, and The Lure of The Surface” *Second Skin* (pp. 23-33)
Kyla Tompkins, “Crude Matter, Queer Form” *ASAP/Journal* 2.2 (pp. 264-268)
Andrew Zago, “Awkward Position” *Perspecta* 42. (pp. 209-222)
Alexander Nehamas, “The Art of Being Unselfish” *Dedalus* Fall 2002 (pp. 57-68)

Week 14: Thanksgiving Break

Week 15: Last Day of Class

12/6 | Essay Draft due (emailed to instructor and bring four copies) + Peer Writing Workshop

Post-Class: 12/13 | Final Essays due (email to Adam.Miller@austin.utexas.edu)